

Bibliometric Assessment and Research Trends: Five Decades of Brand Image

(Penilaian Bibliometrik dan Aliran Penyelidikan: Lima Dekad Imej Jenama)

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ABSTRACT

Brand image distinguishes a company, product, or service from others, making it an asset worth investing in. Recognizing the key themes related to brand image is essential for fostering collaboration and ensuring that research progresses toward desired goals. Therefore, this bibliometric study's objective was to uncover global research trends on the topic of brand image based on publishing output, co-authorship, country, and co-occurrence. We used the Scopus indexing database to identify 2,605 relevant papers published from January 1971 to November 2021. Utilizing the VOSViewer application, bibliometric procedures were subsequently employed to analyze the global performance, development, and impact of brand image research. Our results revealed that: the USA has the most brand image-related publications; the majority of brand image articles have been published in Scopus Quartile 1 journals; and the most recent author keywords are social media, perceived value, and purchase intention. By tracking the origins and evolution of brand image research over time, this article's originality serves as a reference point for expanding the literature on brand image and providing directions for future study.

Keywords: Bibliometric; brand image; Scopus; VOSviewer; author keyword

ABSTRAK

Imej jenama membezakan syarikat, produk, atau perkhidmatan daripada yang lain, menjadikannya aset yang bernilai untuk dilaburkan. Mengiktiraf tema utama berkaitan dengan imej jenama adalah penting untuk memupuk kerjasama dan memastikan penyelidikan berkembang ke arah matlamat yang diinginkan. Oleh itu, objektif kajian bibliometrik ini adalah untuk mendedahkan tren penyelidikan global mengenai topik imej jenama berdasarkan hasil penerbitan, kerjasama penulisan, negara, dan kemunculan bersama. Kami menggunakan pangkalan data pengindeksan Scopus untuk mengenal pasti 2,605 kertas kerja relevan yang diterbitkan dari Januari 1971 hingga November 2021. Dengan menggunakan aplikasi VOSViewer, prosedur bibliometrik kemudiannya digunakan untuk menganalisis prestasi, pembangunan, dan impak global penyelidikan imej jenama. Keputusan kami mendedahkan bahawa: USA memiliki penerbitan tertinggi berkaitan imej jenama; majoriti artikel imej jenama telah diterbitkan dalam jurnal Scopus Quartile 1; dan kata kunci pengarang terbaharu ialah media sosial, persepsi nilai, dan niat membeli. Dengan menjejaki asal usul dan evolusi penyelidikan imej jenama merentasi tempoh masa, keaslian artikel ini berfungsi sebagai titik rujukan untuk mengembangkan literatur tentang imej jenama dan menawarkan tunjuk arah untuk kajian masa hadapan.

Kata kunci: Bibliometrik; imej jenama; Scopus; VOSviewer; kata kunci penulis

INTRODUCTION

Frequently theorized as a type of brand association (Uppal et al. 2018), brand image refers to “perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory” (Keller 1993: 3). It is the outcome of combining tangible and intangible factors to build a clear, distinct, and appealing image that aligns with the perceived image of various stakeholders (Wang & Xu 2015). Brand image research can be traced back to the

1970s (Jacoby et al. 1971), subsequently gaining traction in the 2000s. Over these five decades, the relevance of brand image has grown in marketing research, as evinced by the significantly rising number of publications. For example, empirical research has demonstrated the positive influence of brand image on numerous consumer outcomes, including: loyalty/retention (Hameed et al. 2021; Rahi & Ghani 2016; Shabbir et al. 2018; Thaichon & Quach 2015); satisfaction (ELSamen 2015; Bianchi et al. 2019; Kim & Lee 2018); expectations (Thaichon & Quach 2015); purchase/buying intention (Lu et al. 2021; Nusairat et al. 2021; Shin & Choi 2021); perceived product attractiveness (Yulianto et al. 2021); and trust (Diallo et al. 2021; Mabkhot & Shaari 2015; Susanto et al. 2021; Syed Alwi et al. 2016).

The literature has further presented diverse theories related to brand image, particularly in relation to personality (Zenker & Braun 2017), attitude (Schade et al. 2018), psychology (Mandagi et al. 2021), and combined attributes (Rodriguez-Santos et al. 2008). Additionally, recent research highlights the critical expansion of brand image towards addressing individual behaviors in specific contexts, such as corporate settings (Ab Hamid et al. 2020, 2021) and destination settings (De Noni et al. 2019; Stylos et al. 2017; Woosnam et al. 2020). While corporate brand image has historically underpinned destination brand image (Kavaratzis 2009), the latter is inherently more complex due to involvement from multiple stakeholder groups (Zenker et al. 2017).

Despite the vast amount of extant brand image studies, many of which remain relevant to researchers and practitioners today, certain areas remain underexplored. Specifically, a growing number of brand image studies focus on tourism and destination branding, including the works of Elouali et al. (2020), Freire and Curvelo (2021), Goda (2021), and Tran et al. (2019). In contrast, few studies have investigated how brand image is affected by unexpected scenarios, such as natural disasters and the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, with the digitalization of businesses, the formation of destination brand image through social media engagement remains inadequately studied. Indeed, understanding brand image is challenging, as it demands the consideration of numerous complex and subjective aspects (LeBlanc & Nguyen 1996; Sung & Yang 2008).

Therefore, this paper aimed to meticulously dissect 50 years of brand image literature to delineate research trends, identify research gaps, and propose potential avenues for exploration. The specific objectives of this paper were as follows: i) to analyze the distribution patterns of brand image journal articles across periodicals, and ii) to recommend potential directions for future research. To achieve these objectives, Scopus, an indexing database owned by Elsevier Co., was employed to conduct a bibliometric analysis of brand image. While Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases are interconnected and index many journals, there are certain variations between them (Aghaei Chadegani et al. 2013; Vieira 2013). Notably, Scopus encompasses the world's largest abstract and citation database, spanning a wide array of disciplines, thus covering a broader spectrum of topics compared to WoS.

The originality of this article serves as a reference for expanding the body of literature on brand image, benefiting researchers, government authorities, and practitioners alike with fresh insights into this domain. The subsequent sections of the paper follow this structure. First, the bibliometric citation meta-analysis method is introduced. Citation map analysis is then employed to assess the current status of brand image research, followed by a discussion of the results. Next, potential directions and recommendations for future studies are presented. Finally, the study's limitations are acknowledged, and concluding remarks are offered.

METHOD

Bibliometric analysis uses academic publications from reputable databases as the basis for assessing global research development in a given field. The publications are classified into two types, i.e., empirical papers and review papers. Review papers were excluded from this bibliometric analysis due to their similar focus on discussing recent developments, barriers, and future directions of a specific subject.

STRATEGY FOR DATA SOURCE AND SEARCH

To begin the bibliometric procedure, data mining was conducted in the Scopus database during the first week of November 2021. Titles and abstracts containing the phrase “brand image” were the primary focus, while the search range was from the first publication in 1971 to the most recent in 2021. The code for the search was: TITLE-ABS ("brand image") AND (EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR, 2022)) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, "j")). The search yielded 2,678 journal articles. Phrases like “review,” “bibliometric,” and “overview” were then inserted to exclude review articles, resulting in the identification of 40 publications. After abstract and full-text review, 33 review articles were excluded based on the appearance of the Scopus digital identifier EID as a footprint in the database. Thus, the final dataset consisted of 2,605 articles for bibliometric analysis (see Figure 1).

The VOSviewer program was employed to analyze the 2,605 selected articles based on the following criteria: author, affiliation, source, topic area, year, document type, and country. This software extracts author keywords, citations, countries of interest, and bibliographical data, facilitating the creation and visualization of bibliometric